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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 5 March 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest attack in the ongoing campaign of Palestinian terrorism targeted against the citizens of Israel.

Shortly after 2 p.m. (local time) this afternoon, a powerful explosion ripped apart a public bus in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, scattering human remains and debris throughout the area. At present, 15 people are dead and more than 40 others are wounded, a number of them critically. A spokesperson for the terrorist organization Hamas, which operates openly and freely in Palestinian territory, praised the attack and vowed that such acts will continue.

Today's bombing is merely the latest attempt by Palestinian terrorists to target Israeli civilians. Countless terrorist attacks have been prevented in recent weeks by the extraordinary efforts of Israel's security personnel. In the month of February alone, more than 40 attacks were thwarted. In the past week, Israeli soldiers operating in the Al Pavar and Sha-Anur refugee camps discovered large stores of weaponry intended for use in terrorist attacks. And in mid-January, Israeli police intercepted a terrorist en route to carry out a major attack at Teddy Stadium, a large sports complex in Jerusalem capable of holding thousands of spectators. Countless innocent lives, both Israeli and Palestinian, have been spared as a result of these counter-terrorist measures.

The continuing threat of Palestinian terrorism, along with the success of Israeli security forces in preventing scores of attempted attacks, underscore the absolute necessity of Israel's preventive security measures. While Israel has consistently sought to alleviate the difficulties these measures entail for the Palestinian civilian population, this task is made exponentially more difficult by the criminal tactic of terrorist groups that take refuge in civilian areas, including refugee camps, hospitals and schools. This tactic, which must be uniformly condemned, is a grave violation of international humanitarian law that endangers both Israeli and Palestinian

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civilians. If the global campaign against terrorism is to succeed, it must involve adopting a policy of zero tolerance for such horrific tactics, as well as holding accountable those who continue to glorify murderers as martyrs.

Israel continues to hold the Palestinian leadership responsible for the ongoing campaign of terrorism deliberately aimed at Israeli civilians. Rather than fulfilling their obligations under international law, Security Council resolutions, as well as signed commitments reached with Israel, the Palestinian leadership has chosen instead to use its power and influence to support and encourage acts of violence against innocent civilians. Palestinian television, newspapers, public education and religious institutions remain rife with vile anti-Israeli incitement that provides the inspiration, encouragement and moral sanction that underpin terrorist activity.

Israel calls upon the International community to reaffirm its clear and total rejection of terrorist tactics and to use its authority and influence to compel all regimes that sponsor and incite terrorism to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with international law, signed agreements and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1373 (2001). Only the total rejection of such tactics, and active measures taken to prevent the commission of such brutal attacks, will lay the groundwork for a return to a peaceful process of negotiations capable of satisfying the needs and aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

I submit this letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000, which document the criminal terrorist strategy for which the terrorists and their supporters must be held fully accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 160 and 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Arye Mekel**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.